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BOOK REVIEWS

Huw Price (ed), *The Acts of Welsh Rulers, 1120-1283*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005. pp xlv, 902. 2 maps. 9 genealogical tables. 11 tables. 10 plates. Bibliography. PPC Edition with corrections published in 2010. UK £65.00 hbk, US \$ 110 CDN \$115.03 hbk.

Reviewed by Jane Scott, Durham University

Huw Pryce has contributed significantly to the study of Welsh history through a series of publications spanning a period of over thirty years. The book under review brings together much of this work into one volume and offers the first comprehensive collection of the acts of Welsh rulers dating from 1120 up to the Edwardian conquest of Wales in 1283. There are 618 documents of which 444 survive as text, mainly in Latin. Each document is accompanied by a full summary given in English. The remaining 174 documents are as Pryce states 'known only from mentions in other sources'.

Pryce informs the reader that this volume is 'an attempt to assemble the first comprehensive collects of Acts issued by the native rulers of Wales'. The term 'ruler' has been applied loosely to not only the dominant dynasties of Gwynedd, Deheubarth and Powys, but also to the minor regions to show the fragmentary nature and movement of power and authority. Within this section there is a detailed diplomatic analysis of the acts, an explanation of the types of documents, and the internal and external features of each dynastic region and ruler. Nearly thirty pages are allocated to the discussion of Gwynedd and its rulers during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with less coverage to other dynasties. The later part of Henry I's reign and Stephen's are dealt with sparingly. Whether this is due to no recording of significant events or the actual manuscripts or charters not surviving is not overt although it is probably due to document survival rather than deliberate choice of the editor. The introduction gives a very detailed background to the different territorial and princely rulers. It offers good explanations of familial ties and affiliations. It also discusses who gave patronage to the many religious houses, most notably the Cistercian foundations of the mid to later twelfth century. This allows the reader to understand how the different dynasties were broken up on the death of a strong ruler. This leads on to how territorial fragmentation could lead to changes of allegiance, these changed frequently between some of the stronger and more political astute rulers in Wales during this period.

The bulk of the volume is occupied with the acts themselves; some 615 pages deal with 207 charters, 80 letters patent, 108 letters and 35 agreements. The charters make up some 50.5 per cent of documents in the collection, with a percentage 45.9 of extant charters as authentic texts. Compared with petitions in the corpus, at 3.2 per cent and 2.1 per cent as authentic texts. Pryce also states that territorial divisions show a marked degree of variation and suggests this is due to in part due to a 'reflection of the differing size and political importance of the various territories'. Of the 618 documents 43.7 per cent come from Gwynedd with Powys at 22.0 per cent. The smallest sample of extant documents is coming from Senghennydd with only three of the 618 documents.

Many of the documents concern grants of land to religious foundations and the praying of souls of those departed. They offer the historian information on patronage and

what territory each ruler held at a certain point in time. They also give some information regarding which monastic houses were flourishing and what parcels of land and privileges they held. The material connected to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd dominates with the documents in this section being spread over 138 pages, making fascinating reading. The political interplay between the Welsh prince, Henry III, and Edward I suggests a tonal change, the dialogue and meta-dialogue within the proximity of conflict: useful not only for political historians, but cultural history and linguistic analysis.

Document 307 is unusual as it is from a prince to an official, namely the 'bailiffs of Brecon'. The use of the title 'prince of Wales' in the text for Dafydd ap Llywelyn allows the document to be dated within a twenty month period, due to the reversal of support by the papal mandate of Innocent IV post 1245. What this date range shows is how complicated it can be to deal with manuscripts and such documents. Pryce tells us this is one of only two surviving acts of Dafydd from 1244 onwards which narrows our understanding of this timeframe and perhaps requires a degree of caution. Dates can have a degree of fluidity and they can at times remain elusive, which does complicate their use.

Grants of authority and rights such as charters have long been seen as important sources for historians and related fields of study. They offer such a wealth of information that does not seem important or relevant at first glance. Lists of witnesses allow analysis by the historian or researcher with a view to uncover networks of associations and political alliances. These networks can be far reaching and at times offer connections that could have been overlooked or perhaps less visible to those around them.

It is particularly interesting that some of the documents are from and concern grants of land from women. In document 284, Senana, wife of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn Fawr, writes to try and persuade Henry II to release her husband and son in 1241. She sent an offer of payment and to stand as surety to the king. Unfortunately Gruffudd was moved to the Tower of London and died attempting to escape in 1244. Of the 618 documents, only thirty come from nine women, which is less than five per cent of the collection. It would have been useful if Pryce had attempted some analysis or reference to the lack of documents from or pertaining to women. It does appear an area that he has not been particularly articulate about and has been neglected. Jane Cartwright has done some work on religious women in medieval Wales and she suggests that 'the sources [...] are disparate and varied and, as a result, one needs to adopt a multi-disciplinary approach'.¹

The book does not discuss the tradition of charter writing in Wales in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. It is not made clear whether any documents were produced prior to 1120 and if so how significant they were. It can only be assumed that there was no substantial production of political or religious documentation before this date or nothing significant has either survived or was relevant. The extant manuscripts therefore offer a somewhat distorted view essentially by their survival, as it is hard to get a full understanding of all categories of documents that original existed. It is entirely possible those were produced for example for local administration and grants to lay beneficiaries may well be under-represented. Pryce has though brought together a collection of documents with an extensive analysis and detailed history of each dynasty. He has successfully provided geographically and chronologically documentation which highlights the diversity of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

¹ Jane Cartwright, *Feminine Sanctity and Spirituality in Medieval Wales* (Cardiff, 2008), pp. 3-4.

The collection is particularly useful to those looking at the expansion of English royal power and authority within Wales, and the form these relationships took at different points in time during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The collection would equally be of value to those who have an interest in ecclesiastical establishments and their patrons. The volume offers insight into who was patronising which abbey, priory or monastery. It is perhaps interesting that the Welsh princes favoured Savigniac and Cistercian foundations over the Benedictine establishments, and 59 per cent of all the charters in the book are in support of Welsh Cistercian houses. What Pryce's book shows is that in less than 100 years after the conquest of Wales by the Normans, the Welsh princes were taking local monasteries under their patronage and giving grants of land and privileges to these religious establishments. Scholars will be indebted to Huw Pryce for the sheer quantity and analysis of the documents held in this edition. Perhaps in the future one avenue worth exploring for the publication of such collections of documents would be a digital database manager. This would enable digital searching of content and allow cross-referencing of individuals and other search patterns, and allow greater access to a valuable resource to all who have an interest in twelfth and thirteenth century Wales.

Phyllis Kinney, *Welsh Traditional Music*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press in association with Cymdeithas Alawon Gwerin Cymru, 2011. xviii + 289pp. 9 plates. 200 music examples. 2 appendices. Bibliography. UK £24.99 hbk, US \$35 CDN \$36.60 hbk.

Reviewed by Trevor Herbert, The Open University

Phyllis Kinney, an American by birth, tells us that she first encountered Welsh music as a college student in Michigan. A Welsh lecturer introduced her to Brinley Richards' *The Songs of Wales* (1873), a book compiled in the wake of the victories of *Côr Mawr* at the Crystal Palace choral competitions of 1872/73. Amidst other heady cultural trends, it proffered the idea that the Welsh should be regarded as a musical nation. Richards' book contained transcriptions of Welsh traditional songs, but it also famously included his own 'God Bless the Prince of Wales' with Welsh and English text. He had comfortably tucked it between '*Ar Hyd y Nos*' and '*Hen Wlad fy Nhadau*' as if it naturally belonged there. Whether the Welsh noticed the sycophantic liberty is of little importance; the book was hugely popular, and it was said that a copy rested on every piano in Wales. Five editions were published by 1884, as well as separate versions in tonic solfa notation.

Richards' brief prefatory essay put forward the idea that an appreciation of and aptitude for music was natural to Welshness, and justified his claim by recourse to evidence from the deepest recesses of Welsh history. Indeed, the exhortation for 'those minstrels of yore' to bless the Prince of Wales might be seen as part of the same way of thinking. Richards' book contained no discoveries of traditional national songs; he drew on the researches of the admirable Maria Jane Williams (Aberpergwm), whose *Ancient National Airs of Gwent and Morganwg* (1838) was one of the best collections of the century and followed Edward Jones' extensive *Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Welsh Bards* (1784). In fact, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Richards could have drawn on a fair number of secondary source collections. Much has been made of the attachment of Wales to music since then, but while an air of self-consciousness lurks in more modern versions of

the branding, it is hard not to see it as carrying something of the legacy of the Victorian Cymmrodorion revival in which Richards played so prominent a part. For example, Mai Jones's 1941 ballad for the BBC *Welsh Rarebits* radio programme, 'We'll keep a welcome in the hillsides', is the source for the phrase 'land of song', and one could speculate that the ease with which the chorus of Max Boyce's 'urban folksong', 'Hymns and arias' (1973), gained happy acceptance might be viewed in the same light. One is bound to ask whether the idea of Wales as a musical country really does have genuine substance.

The difficulty is that Welsh music must be understood as having a very broad spectrum. It embraces diverse genres and practices that have held very distinctive positions in Welsh culture at different times. There has never been a Welsh composer of global importance – with the possible exception of Ivor Novello, who, it could be argued, was Welsh in only the strictly biological and geographical sense. On the other hand, congregational singing and choralism more generally has been genuinely distinctive, as were the 'Cool Cymru' phase and the stellar talents of the country's opera singers. There is much for Wales's cultural propagandists to gloat about, but for this to be seen as one of the cultural denominators of nationhood, one has to look at deeper and more lasting trends.

Phyllis Kinney's book offers an unprecedented contribution to our understanding of this subject because it is based on a detailed and analytic scrutiny of what must be regarded as the continuous core of music in Welsh history. In a brief but clever preface to the book, Sally Harper defines 'traditional music' in terms of its reliance on oral and aural transmission (and the consequent emergence of different versions of songs and tunes), its indigenous quality and its capacity to endure across different temporal and geographical domains. It can also be added that traditional music can be seen as having special strength because of its proximity to actual lives as led: cyclic festivals, everyday tasks, gaiety, love won and lost, superstitions, reflections of authority, of nature, of childhood, and a range of other themes, all implicitly revealing hints of the world as it was known to the people who performed or listened to this music. Here music is not a mere accompaniment to history: it is an invaluable source for the historical process because it provides such unique insights.

Kinney examines the historiography of Welsh traditional music in fine detail, and pays courteous respect to the investigators and collectors who preceded her, even those with less sensitive hands than hers. The book is based on an encyclopaedic knowledge of repertoires of traditional Welsh music and of the secondary literature they have inspired, but its greatest strength comes from her command of the primary sources. Her treatment of the big questions about Welsh traditional music as well as the finer details of the sources is done in the context of some key transitional points: from the bardic orders and the gentry to the vernacular; oral transmission to manuscript to print; the interventions of the collectors; ruralism to urbanism. It ends with a chapter on the great collector J. Lloyd Williams and the Welsh Folk Song Society. At every turn she shows a fine sense of nuance about music and text. It is the best book of its type to date, and her narrative, along with the many transcriptions of tunes and songs, the comprehensive bibliography and the chapters on collectors and collections, ensure that the book will remain the definitive reference work on Welsh traditional music. Its place in broader aspects of Wales's cultural history is assured. It is an outstanding book by an outstanding scholar.

Lisa Peters, *Politics, Publishing and Personalities: Wrexham Newspapers, 1848-1914*. Chester: University of Chester Press, 2011. vii + 71pp. 26 figures. Bibliography. UK £12.99, US \$ 38.35b CDN \$34.82 pbk.

Reviewed by Bob Nicholson, Edge Hill University

These are boom times for press historians. Over the last decade, the mass-digitisation of newspapers and periodicals has catapulted a once-peripheral discipline into centre stage. In 2003, only a small handful of titles were accessible digitally. Most researchers had little choice but to trawl through poor-quality microfilms in local libraries or make occasional pilgrimages to the British Library's repository at Colindale and wade through stacks of bound volumes in the hope of locating a few useful morsels of evidence before their research budget dried up. As a result, most historians used the press sparingly or not at all. How rapidly things have changed. Today there are thousands of publications available online, ranging from major national dailies to short-lived provincial magazines. The convenience of online access, and the new methodological possibilities offered by keyword searching, have kick-started something of a digital gold rush in which an ever-increasing number of researchers are eagerly setting out to mine the press for new nuggets of information. It is here, as guides to this new frontier, that press historians have a particularly vital role to play. In order to make sense of the materials we find through keyword searching it is essential to understand something of their history – to know the ways in which these texts were originally produced, distributed, and consumed. The political allegiance of a paper, the predilections of its editor, its relationship with rival publications, and the size, distribution and makeup of its audience all combine to shape its contents. Good historians understand this, but even the most conscientious among us are sometimes guilty of extracting a juicy quotation from a paper without understanding anything of its social, cultural, and political identity. If newspapers and periodicals are going to be interpreted effectively – and not just strip-mined using digital search tools – it is vital that more research be conducted into their changing characters.

Mapping out this “vast terra incognita of print” is laborious but essential work.² The histories of venerable publications like *The Times* and *Punch* have been chronicled by a small number of dutiful biographers, but the vast majority of less august papers have received only sporadic attention from scholars.³ The lives of regional newspapers – long regarded as one of the lowliest positions in the pecking-order of print – have received even shorter shrift and have generally been explored only by local enthusiasts and the occasional PhD student. And yet, it is the provincial press that has benefited most markedly from the digital revolution. In many online archives, regional publications now outnumber their metropolitan counterparts. Only 14% of the *British Newspaper Archive's* 213 titles were published in London. Similarly, whilst researchers may once have chosen to privilege the

² Patrick Leary, ‘Victorian Studies in the Digital Age’, in *The Victorians since 1901: Histories, Representations and Revisions*, ed. by Miles Taylor & Michael Wolf (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 201-214, (206).

³ See, for example: Richard D. Altick, *Punch: The Lively Youth of a British Institution, 1841-1851*, (Columbus, 1997); Patrick Leary, *The Punch Brotherhood: Table Talk and Print Culture in Mid-Victorian London*, (London, 2010); *The Times, History of The Times*, 5 vols, (London, 1935-1952); David Ayerst, *The Manchester Guardian: Biography of a Newspaper*, (Ithaca, 1971).

voices of national papers, keyword searches carry fewer prejudices and return results from the *Whitstable Times* and the *Hampshire Telegraph* ahead of their London namesakes. This reflects the golden age of provincial journalism in the last half of the nineteenth century when, as Andrew Hobbs has pointed out, local and regional papers were arguably more influential than their metropolitan rivals.⁴ Keen observers will already have noticed these publications – along with titles like the *Bury and Norwich Post* and the *Blackburn Standard* – cropping up in the footnotes of an increasing number of academic articles. In other words, we have reached a situation in which the least understood segment of the press has, through sheer weight of numbers and the democratising influence of search engines, unexpectedly become the most visible. It is important, therefore, that press historians get to grips with the problem of the provincial press with some urgency.

All of which finally brings us to the subject of this review. *Politics, Publishing and Personalities: Wrexham Newspapers, 1848-1914* by Lisa Peters seeks to plug one of the many gaps in our understanding of the provincial press by mapping out the publishing landscape of a North Wales town during the second half of the nineteenth century. It is, in truth, a rather curious book. It aims, as the introduction explains, to present a shortened version of the author's PhD thesis.⁵ The original text – which spanned 2 volumes and some 600 pages – has been condensed to a brisk 71 pages, including the bibliography and illustrations. The chief victims of this editing process have been the dissertation's footnotes. Despite being issued from a university press, the book does not contain a single reference and only hints towards its source material in a brief bibliography. It is, in other words, more of a pamphlet than a book; an *amuse-bouche* designed to whet our appetites just enough to seek out the main course of the thesis. This is an interesting way of disseminating doctoral research, but readers might justifiably baulk at paying the list-price of £12.99 only to find that a fuller and richer text can be downloaded for free from the British Library's EThOS service.

Despite its truncated size the book is divided into four chapters. The first provides a brief history of the Wrexham area, focusing mainly on the development of the town's railway links. This is useful introductory information for those readers unfamiliar with the region but probably offers little that is new to those already versed in the history of the town. The second chapter provides a similarly brief history of provincial newspapers. All of the usual landmarks in press history are accounted for: the introduction and repeal of the taxes on knowledge, the reform act, the impact of the railway, the telegraph, and new printing presses, the new journalism of the 1880s, and the eventual arrival of mass-market, national dailies like the *Daily Mail*. Again, readers unfamiliar with press history will find this a useful overview (particularly the sub-section on the Welsh press), but it doesn't offer anything particularly original.

The third chapter forms the real meat of the book and contains historical sketches of nine Wrexham newspapers. These publications range from long-running papers like the liberal *Wrexham Advertiser* and conservative *Wrexham Guardian*, to short-lived experiments like the *Wrexham Recorder* (the town's first paper) and the *Wrexham Free Press* (which bizarrely metamorphosed into a temperance newspaper). Each sketch charts the fluctuating fortunes of a paper, its changing editorship, transformations in content and size, and includes some occasional remarks on circulation. These descriptive accounts provide a

⁴ Andrew Hobbs, "Reading the local paper: social and cultural functions of the local press in Preston, Lancashire, 1855-1900", PhD thesis, (University of Central Lancashire, 2010).

⁵ Lisa Jayne Peters, "Wrexham Newspapers, 1848-1914", PhD thesis, (University of Wales, 2002).

useful way to get a quick handle on the identity of each paper and the account of the *Wrexham Advertiser* – the only paper from the town to be digitised thus far – will prove particularly useful for researchers. The final chapter, perhaps the most engaging of the book, discusses some of the acrimonious rivalries between the town's papers and mentions some amusingly petty flashpoints. These disputes make for a lively conclusion to the book and would make interesting material for a longer, more analytical study. In particular, they highlight the importance of understanding the relationships between rival provincial papers – an important part of press history that can easily be missed in digital archives that rarely hold more than one paper for each town.

The book is fluently written and based on a substantial body of research, but its deliberately shortened form makes it frustratingly lacking in academic analysis and scholarly weight. This is a shame, for there is a great deal of insight that might profitably have been teased out from the research that underpins the book. Press historians interested in provincial Welsh journalism should proceed directly to the author's impressively weighty PhD dissertation, whilst those interested in the social and cultural history of Wrexham may not discover a great deal here that they did not already know about the town. The book will perhaps be at its most useful in local libraries and record offices where it will provide researchers with a handy guide to the town's key newspapers. Ultimately, whilst any contribution to our knowledge of the provincial press is to be welcomed, Wrexham's newspapers, and Lisa Peters' diligent research into their history, deserve a more substantial treatment than this.

Ros Aitken, *The Prime Minister's Son: Stephen Gladstone, Rector of Hawarden*. Chester: University of Chester Press, 2012. xxii + 286 pp. 23 illustrations. UK £14.99, US\$ 54.48 CDN\$41 pbk.

Reviewed by Paul Ward, University of Huddersfield

William Ewart Gladstone plays a prominent part in Ros Aitken's biography of Stephen Gladstone, the Anglican Rector of Hawarden in north Wales between 1872 and 1904. The father dominated his son's life and Aitken reflects this by putting the Prime Minister first in the book's title before his son. This is fitting, since it is unlikely that the biography would have such appeal if Stephen was just another Church of England vicar. This is a biography of Stephen Gladstone's relationship to the Established Church but it is also a personal biography about his relationship with the Grand Old Man.

There is much of interest in this well-written account of life in a minor aristocratic family in the nineteenth century, in which despite Gladstone's politics, privilege was taken for granted even while concerns were expressed over the problems of urban poverty. Born in 1844, Stephen was educated at Eton and Oxford. He studied Theology at Cuddesdon College and was ordained into the Church of England and through inheritance took over the £3000 per annum living at Hawarden in 1872. He was not, as Aitken writes, of 'the highest intellectual ability' and was 'hampered by chronic physical problems' (p. 49), but nonetheless lived a comfortable life on seven times the annual income of most Anglican clergy. He enjoyed the global lifestyle of his class, so in 1866, he visited Italy with his parents and siblings, recording that 'All day long we spend in seeing buildings, churches,

ruins, pictures, statues, gardens, villas or palaces ... last night we went to hear the opera.' Faced by ill-health in 1877, Stephen visited Cape Town in South Africa for the climate for four months (he won a chess competition on the voyage out).

Stephen's life, like his father's, was based on a sense of duty and was underpinned by constant self-reflection and doubt. Aitken describes emotional anguish, personal crises and a mental breakdown, caused not least by domination by his father and the proximity of his family in the middle years of his life at Hawarden. A single example of the GOM's influence on Stephen's actions reveals much about the relationship. The Established Church was experiencing theological divisions with the Oxford Movement encouraging ritual to restore the church to its true medieval spirituality. When Stephen inherited office at Hawarden he wanted to write to the congregation to assert his right to adopt some catholic practices, including Holy Communion. His father read the letter before it was sent and made substantial changes to its wording. Whereas Stephen wrote, to mollify the congregation, that he 'would keep up the services in their present form', William changed the sentence to read that Stephen would 'adhere in full to the spirit of the existing services' (pp. 81-2). William Gladstone's skill in politics sought to assert Stephen's authority over his new parish, yet at the same time undermined his son's autonomy. As Aitken declares, 'Right from the start ... Gladstone was the power behind the pulpit (p. 81).

This is a detailed and well written biography, exploring Gladstone's long life across the mid and late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. It carefully examines his attitudes towards religion in an urbanising Britain and in north Wales. It delineates his responses to his father's domination and to the loss of his own son in the First World War. It is marred by lack of references, which masks the extensive underpinning research. It is useful reading both for the view 'from below' of William Gladstone but also as an account of anguish in an aristocratic family in the long nineteenth century.

Chris Williams and Sian Rhiannon Williams (eds), *Gwent County History Volume 4: Industrial Monmouthshire, 1780-1914*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011. xx + 376pp. 5 plates, 39 figures. 32 tables. 10 maps. UK £65.00, US \$ 70 CDN \$73.20 hbk.

Reviewed by Louise Miskell, Swansea University

The general editor of the Gwent County History series, Professor Ralph Griffiths, and the editors of this volume, present the 1780-1914 period as the most dynamic in the county's history because of the dramatic population increase and industrial growth of the era. The same could be said for the neighbouring county of Glamorgan and it is evident as early as the volume's Preface, that it is difficult to view the Gwent experience of demographic and economic development in this era in isolation from events to the west of the county boundary. The distinctiveness and identity of Gwent is a question which looms large in this volume. Aspects of the county's story are tackled by an eclectic range of contributors, from academic historians at a variety of career stages, to writers and researchers from other spheres. Their contributions are arranged in eighteen chapters organised in thematic groups. The first seven explore the main economic and demographic features of the county. The inclusion of two chapters on rural life serves as a reminder that industrialisation did not reach all parts of the county and agriculture continued to provide an important source

of income and employment for sections of the populace throughout the period under study. Chapters 8-13 have a cultural focus, dealing with art, language and literature, recreation and religion; while chapters 14-17 explore aspects of the political life of Gwent, from parliamentary level through to local government and labour politics.

As W. T. R. Pryce's chapter on 'Population and Population Movements' illustrates, the county was characterised by an internal east-west divide. Most of the urban, industrial settlements grew up on the western side of the River Usk, with the north-western region centred on Tredegar as the early nineteenth-century hotspot of expansion, and later Ebbw Vale in the south-west of the county taking over as the focus of industrial growth. All the while, Newport was the county's principal urban hub, with population growth of 86 per cent in the two decades after 1891. Much of the county's population expansion was due to in-migration, with neighbouring English counties like Gloucestershire an important source of in-comers.

The uneven nature of urbanisation in the towns of Monmouthshire is a theme returned to in Andy Croll's chapter on 'Local Government'. In the first half of the nineteenth century there was a stark divide between the towns of the iron district, which had only parish administrative structures, and Newport and Abergavenny where improvement commissions existed to manage the paving, watching, lighting and sanitation of the streets. The nature of the built environment which grew up to accommodate this burgeoning population is further examined by C. Roy Lewis in his chapter on 'Urban Society'. Alongside the health and sanitary problems of the new urban communities the author takes a welcome look at the facilities and services that evolved to meet the social needs of the population. The growing towns of the county, he notes, 'spawned a range of public institutions ... workmen's clubs, purpose-built stores...' (p.121) and of course a diverse housing stock comprising not only terraces built for the working classes, but also homes for the shop-keepers and professional classes of Newport and the other key towns. In a fascinating chapter on 'Visual Culture', Peter Lord and John Morgan Guy use the economic model of supply and demand and apply it to Monmouthshire's network of patrons and producers of artistic output. Important artistic nodal points grew up around the homes of the Morgan family of Tredegar House and Augusta Hall (Lady Llanover), as well as around some of the county's key topographical features, most notably the River Wye, admired by artists and intellectuals from the mid eighteenth century onwards. But the visual culture explored by Lord and Guy in this chapter is broadly defined, ranging from the imagery of Welsh womanhood spawned by Augusta Hall's writings on national dress, to the decoration of the small, lacquered boxes, trays, teapots and other domestic items, collectively known as Pontypool 'japanware'. It was a product that epitomised the close links between industry and art as well as the distinctiveness of the visual output from the county.

The changing status and nomenclature of the county, immediately signalled with the inclusion of both 'Gwent' and 'Monmouthshire' in the title of this volume, is probed by Chris Williams in the final chapter, 'The Question of Monmouthshire'. It was Monmouthshire rather than Gwent which was the most commonly used name for the county in the nineteenth century. Not until local government re-organisation of the 1970s was Gwent officially adopted. But the county's identity question went much further than its name. Uncertainty over whether it should be classed as an English or Welsh county had existed since the Acts of Union, but during the nineteenth century the issue became

politicised. Linguistically, the county was becoming anglicised as English migrants poured in to find employment in the coal mines and ironworks. At the same time, a number of legislative measures were being devised for Wales and the question of whether or not they should apply to Monmouthshire had to be considered. Ultimately, Williams argues, what facilitated its continued claims to be Welsh, was that Monmouthshire fitted in to a new definition of Welshness that was emerging by the beginning of the twentieth century, one based on political radicalism, cultural heritage, popular leisure and religious enthusiasm. In addressing issues of identity, borders, cultural distinctiveness and industrial transformation, this volume has much to offer a readership well beyond its own geographical remit. In drawing together a comprehensive collection of studies of the county, accompanied by detailed maps, illustrations and statistical tables, it promises to provide a lasting reference point for scholars and students, and ultimately plays its own part in locating nineteenth-century Monmouthshire firmly on the historical map of Wales.

Martin Johnes, *Wales since 1939*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012. pp xv, 465. UK£16.99, USA\$ 32.95, CDN\$32.95

Reviewed by Paul Ward, University of Huddersfield

After devolution of some political power and authority to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in the late twentieth century, some historians have considered that a 'four nations' approach to the history of the British Isles is called for. This approach often seeks to disaggregate the histories of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, in order to consider the different and divergent paths each has taken. The publication of Martin Johnes' admirably detailed and comprehensive *Wales since 1939* might be seen as a contribution to nation-building after fifteen years of devolution. Johnes explores the history of Wales from the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 until 2009 and manages to bring the historian's eye and craft to all parts of the period in equal measure. The final chapter on Wales between 1997 and 2009 is one of the most impressive analyses of contemporary Welsh national identity and politics that I have read. Johnes explores the flowering of a popular sense of Welshness, quoting a woman in 2007 who considered that 'being Welsh is everywhere' (p. 428). 'After a decade of devolution,' Johnes concludes, 'Wales could no longer be called a nearly nation' (p. 443). He argues that the expression of Welsh national identity after 1999 was not solely the outcome of the establishment of the Welsh Assembly but instead emerged as part of a longer-term process since the Second World War. *Wales since 1939* therefore places discussion of national identity at the heart of the analysis of social, political, economic and cultural developments. It is a book both about living in Wales and thinking about being Welsh. Yet, Johnes weaves the history of the 'complex and contradictory nation' (p. 2) of Wales into a narrative entangled with British history. Likewise, when discussing Welshness he recognizes that it did not preclude Britishness but added to its cultural diversity. *Wales since 1939* suggests that writing the history of the four nations remains a joint venture.

The book has a broadly chronological framework but is combined with discussion of a range of themes. Affluence, youth, class and community, rural society, national identity, politics and social change effectively hold the analytical commentary together to ensure

that it is possible to consider continuity and change across a busy 70 years of history. Every chapter considers both Wales in its own right but also its shared experiences with the rest of Britain. For example, in discussing the geographical mobility enforced by the Second World War, Johnes remarks that 'Leaving home could be traumatic, especially for Welsh speakers sent to England' (p. 13). Johnes very successfully knits together shared developments and the specific circumstances of Welsh society and politics. The breadth of discussion is remarkable. He discusses mining and nationalisation, the numbers of women in work, changing social roles, religion, the rural economy, tourism, the health of the Welsh language, the role of television in people's lives, and the experience of shopping. In 1965 he tells us, for example, that Llanelli had both Fine Fare and Tesco supermarkets. He discusses ethnicity in Wales, which he explains was less diverse than in England, so that in 1971 the census showed that only 17,000 people living in Wales had been born in the Commonwealth. He discusses young people, permissiveness and promiscuity, including its limits, since Cardiff City Council refused to allow X-rated films to be shown on Sundays in the 1960s. He analyses the political fortunes of the Labour Party, but points out that the Conservatives secured 20 per cent of the vote even in Aneurin Bevan's constituency of Ebbw Vale in Labour's landslide year of 1945. The development of nationalism of many varieties is explored in several chapters. There is immense detail throughout the book, including, for example, the decline in the numbers of field mice and owls due to changes in farming practices.

This makes for a thoroughly enjoyable book to read and it is clear that Johnes considers the accessibility of high quality research to be part of his mission as a university-based historian. The book is accompanied by a website (at <http://martinjohnes.wordpress.com/>) containing material for teachers, links to sources, further reading and a series of short contributions about Wales in film, numbers, pictures and sounds. All of this supports the academic rigour of the book's research and its intellectual conclusions. The detailed research allows Johnes to argue a sophisticated conclusion about the relationship between Wales and Britain, Welshness and Britishness. He quotes novelist John Williams, who argued that 'to come from Wales is to be at once part of mainstream British culture and yet at the same time significantly other' (p. 433). Johnes nuances this further to suggest that Welsh otherness should not be exaggerated. Wales, he argues, was distinct and different in many ways but at the same time was part of broader British society. He suggests that the BBC series *Gavin and Stacey* 'where different ways of speaking and a pride in where you came from could not disguise the fact that people from Barry [in South Wales] and Essex [in eastern England] held the same essential values, lived the same essential lives and could, quite easily, fall in love' (p. 433).

Johnes is right to consider that Welsh history has been marginalized within wider British history. It is hoped that the publication of this fine book, detailed, thorough and rigorous, will counter the tendency of many British historians to focus exclusively or predominantly on England. It deserves a place on the reading lists of all university British history courses and could be fruitfully read by those seeking to understand and formulate policy for a changing United Kingdom.

Sonia Tilson, *The Monkey Puzzle Tree*. (Windsor, ON: Biblioasis, 2013), 220pp UK £11.99, US\$ 16.95 CDN\$19.95 pbk.

Reviewed by Jodie Matthews, University of Huddersfield

Readers in the UK have become horribly familiar with the term ‘historic abuse allegations’ since the Savile scandal broke in 2012, with lengthy reports about the ways in which institutions including the BBC failed to protect children from predatory male abusers and about the ongoing effects of this abuse on those they targeted. More widely, the Catholic church in several countries has had to apologise for the behaviour of its priests as stories of abuse are finally given credence decades later. One of the effects of the delays in recognising these abuses has been that survivors not only have an isolated incident to recount, but also often a lifetime of mistrust, self-harm and emotional difficulties that they trace back to those early experiences. Sonia Tilson’s novel is thus timely in its treatment of similar themes, but is not confined to being a fictionalised misery memoir; it also strives to evoke the attitudes and anxieties of a particular time and place: wartime South Wales.

It is no spoiler to reveal that six-year-old Gillian Davies, evacuated from Swansea in 1939, is sexually abused by the son of her foster family and tells no-one. The effects of this molestation are revealed in a series of flashbacks until the adult emigrant returns to confront her abuser in a scene of wish fulfilment for surely many abuse survivors. The flashbacks occur chronologically, a device that produces a straightforward narrative for the reader but also symptomatizes a rather simplistic treatment of Gillian’s secrets and motivations; the extent of the novel’s revelations mean that Gillian is gradually laid totally bare and the character is left without a great deal of complexity.

Mrs Davies, the mother whose instruction never to shame her seals Gillian’s mouth about her maltreatment (as sexual abuse is, profoundly, bound up with shame), is almost cartoonish in her maternal coldness right up to her death. Her distance serves two purposes, however; one is manifestly taken up by the novel but the other takes some more reflective reading. First, in old age, Mrs Davies’s determination to misunderstand her children’s emotional past and its repercussions helps to structure the novel’s exploration of varying interpretations of personal history. Without the frustrating silence between mother and daughter, Gillian’s internal narrative would find no articulation on the page. Second, and perhaps more interestingly for the interpretation of the novel, Gillian and her mother’s relationship enacts a contemporaneous psychoanalytic narrative attached to wartime anxiety. That is, an individual civilian’s response to the circumstances of war (bombing, evacuation, food shortage, imminent invasion etc.) has more to do with the internal conflicts resulting from early interpersonal relationships than it does with international conflict and the threats and deprivations to which it gives rise.⁶ A consideration of this psychoanalytic approach helps to complicate what the novel might be said to be *about*, and it is not overly indulgent to make that consideration given that the novel explicitly deals – almost superficially, given the conceit’s potential – with ruptures in the narrative present by a character’s emotional past. Is the novel, then, simply about the effects of child sexual abuse? Is it also about the untold psychological effects of wartime evacuation? Or is it additionally about fractured mother-child relationships that not only fail to mitigate harm

⁶ Michael Shapira, ‘The Psychological Study of Anxiety in the Era of the Second World War’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 24: 1 (2013), 31–57, p. 54.

to the child but also cause it? Finally, might it be said to be about the ways in which any of these themes are understood at different points in time? I would suggest the latter, with an emphasis on the cultural context of the novel's setting. It focuses on varying interpretations of a particular set of events in the past, bringing to light how profoundly individuals fail or refuse to acknowledge another's suffering.

The threat of aerial bombardment helped to produce the conditions in which Gillian is abused. Physical harm from bombings was not an unreal threat; Swansea suffered a three-night Blitz in 1941. While we may now be familiar with the language of abuse survival, it is incredibly difficult to reconstruct for an audience that did not experience it this other traumatic childhood event: children's forced separation from their parents on a mass scale. That this separation was ostensibly normalised by the numbers of families who went through it – it has been termed a 'childhood diaspora' – does not detract from the pain this caused a generation of children (and their parents).⁷ Indeed, contemporary commentators raised just these concerns, including the psychologist whose theory of attachment would become so influential, John Bowlby (Rusby and Tasker, 392). Later, a 1949 study of 1200 children and the psychological effects on them of evacuation emphasised the unsuitability of many foster homes (Rusby and Tasker); Maenordy is far from a suitable shelter for Gillian and her brother. Maenordy as a physical location is only a small part of the book's chronology, but as a psychogeographical location it is much more important, creeping back into Gillian's decisions and emotional landscape late into her life. Tilson is careful not to point the finger of blame at the authorities for their lack of care; Gillian and Tommy's evacuation to the Macphersons' farm has, apparently, been specially arranged to maintain the class boundaries of children taken into private homes (Tilson, 14). Nonetheless, the novel combines the fears (occasionally bordering on hysteria in mainstream media) of our own times about overseeing the bodily and emotional safety of children – thus creating for the reader a horrible sense of inevitability to Angus' actions – with the historical description of fears excited by total war in Europe and the extreme steps taken to protect the young. This 'protection' fails completely in Gillian's case, making it an adult *Goodnight Mister Tom* in reverse, and her mother's particular personality complicates that failure. Tilson does not deal with the ways in which their separation, the war context, and the possibility of abuse were framed in the 1940s, and such an investigation may have resulted in a more multi-dimensional Mrs Davies with a realistic psychical life. The wartime setting is, after all, a period in which a second generation of practicing analysts after Freud contributed to national debates about anxiety, trauma, and psycho-sexual relationships. It should be noted, though, that the novel is unspoilt by the opposite of such an investigation, namely anachronistic discussions of emotions and psychology, and there are no obviously jarring moments where characters discuss events in a way that seem unlikely in the historical context.

The relationship between Gillian and her mother outside the bounds of Blitz conditions exacerbates the effects of her sexual abuse. The professional view of coping with fear, vulnerability and traumatic experience by 1939 was not that of simply prescribing a 'stiff upper lip', so Gillian's mother does not just reflect the dominant discourse of the day; she is a particularly hard woman. On a national scale, what is now jingoistically presented

⁷ Cited in James S.M. Rusby and Fiona Tasker, 'Long-term effects of the British evacuation of children during World War 2 on their adult mental health', *Aging & Mental Health*, 13: 3 (2009), 391–404, p. 391.

as 'Blitz spirit', cited as an example of British national character, was not the anticipated reaction to total war: in 1938 'the most frightening image of the impending disaster was that of a civilian population losing emotional control', a factor in the organisation of mass evacuation (Shapira, 36). The threat of losing emotional control and failing to keep up appearances seems to dog Mrs Davies for her entire life. An example is her attitude towards her Jewish dressmaker, a woman she fondly remembers as a 'friend', but whom she refused to invite to her Victory party (Tilson, 66-8). She is frustrated that Gillian cannot accept the received wisdom of such a class- and race-based decision when the child questions the logic of these boundaries. As an individual, Mrs Davies is ill-equipped to 'talk it out' with her children when it comes to the separation of evacuation, let alone the shaming concept of a six-year-old being coerced into sexual activity. Gillian appears bewildered by others' decisions for the rest of her life, a trait formed by her early relationships. Evacuation itself is, for Gillian, a terrible experience. Its emotional backdrop means that she is unable ever to fully resolve why she feels the way she does about it and continues to misunderstand why people behave the way they do.

Gillian's abuse is not the only remembered wartime experience. For instance, a trip to the cinema to see *The Bells of Saint Mary's* ends in the child witnessing Pathé news footage of the liberation of Nazi concentration camps (Tilson, 70-2). Anyone who has seen the footage will know that it is graphic and shocking, even now when the details of such camps are well known. The child's experience of the film is well-rendered, and it is an arresting moment in the novel. Despite being remembered, however, it is not an incident that appears in another manifestation later in life like Gillian's relationships. It is left hanging in the past, like the sudden death of Gillian's Indian boarding schoolmate (Tilson, 91), while other events return, intriguingly, again and again. An example of this is the recurrence of Gillian's contemporary and fellow evacuee Gladys throughout the recent and historical narratives. Each mention of her brings childhood anxiety back into the frame, usually related to the damage Angus did. Unfortunately, she is a lightly-sketched character – like Gillian's brother, Tom, who seems not to grow up at all – who might have had more depth and detail. Gillian's friend Vanna from Tregwyr, where Gillian and Tom live with their grandparents after leaving, is another character who allows for further instances of bewilderment about people's actions and motivations. It takes decades (and Vanna spelling out the details) for Gillian to understand Vanna's rage about the 11-plus exam and the way it consigned her to a job in Woolworth's while Gillian proceeded to boarding school and, later, university. Vanna and her family are ostracised by the local Apostolic community because they are Catholic, Irish, and poor and there is an enjoyable joke about the children losing a figure of baby Jesus from the crèche, only for the neighbours to offer their thanks on high when they announce that they have 'found Jesus'. Vanna's mother serves as a replacement mother figure for the impressionable Gillian, refusing to judge or conform and sympathising with her love of literature.

Gillian is shaped almost as much by this literature as her relationships beyond books, and the emigrant to Canada recalling her childhood on return to Wales thinks of Dylan Thomas more than once – though her obsession with *Jane Eyre* will never be surpassed. That Thomas crops up repeatedly is, perhaps, redolent both of Gillian's connection with Anglophone Welsh culture and her sense of being continually out-of-place; the emigrant who compulsively refers to a celebrity of Welsh literature is voicing her

concern about who she is and where she belongs as much as the evacuated child made to feel her disadvantage for not speaking Welsh in a Welsh-speaking village.

The Monkey Puzzle Tree raises many intriguing questions about the civilian experience of war and its lasting effects, and in particular the risks associated with the dislocation of children from those they trust. That some of the characters are briefly drawn or rather literally described, and some events somewhat clichéd, are flaws, but the novel successfully bridges the past and present to explore memory and trauma.

Dai Smith, *Dream On* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2013), 335pp. UK £14.99 US\$16.95 CDN\$ 23.99

Reviewed by Jodie Matthews, University of Huddersfield

Dai Smith is the Raymond Williams Chair in Cultural History with the Centre for Research into the English Literature and Language of Wales at Swansea University. He is Chair of the Arts Council of Wales, and author of, amongst several other non-fictional works, *In the Frame: Memory in Society 1910 to 2010* (2010) and *Raymond Williams: A Warrior's Tale* (2008). He is also a regular broadcaster and commentator on Welsh history and culture. Little wonder, then, that his first fictional work looks to personalise the Welsh political and social struggles (and successes) of the second half of the twentieth century, and places twenty-first-century regeneration in the context of that history.

It is a text of fragments – or ‘shards’, as protagonist Billy Maddox refers to the elements of a piecemeal archive. These shards appear both formally and in the (multiple) central characters’ search for the meanings of the scant knowledge they have about themselves and the people around them. If one thing brings these characters together, it is perhaps their pursuit of context.

The novel – if the term is appropriate for *Dream On*’s unorthodox structure – opens with an extract from Roy Orbison’s ‘In Dreams’ as its epigraph, strangely including the dates of Orbison’s birth and death as well as the release date of the song. This interest in dates continues throughout, perhaps merely the historian’s impulse but also a reminder of what History (as a narrative, as something so often told by those who were not part of it) is to the novel and its characters. Figures such as Aneurin Bevan and Arthur Scargill make fleeting appearances to ground the narrative in time, place and recollection. Smith’s published histories are also, it should be noted, personal and unconventional, and the novel is similar in many ways to *In the Frame*, including its extensive, almost anthological, quotation (here, of other characters as well as literary and historical texts).

The fiction proper starts with ‘Obit. Page’, in which a Valleys-born politician contemplates the representation of a life’s work. The obituary, when published, will likely be accompanied by a photograph of him during the Miners’ Strike taken by Billy Maddox, whom we meet again later. The dying man remembers a schoolboy incident on a bus to the accompaniment of Guy Mitchell’s ‘Singin’ the Blues’, the lyrics to which guide the reader into the second section of the book, ‘Never Felt More’. The first chapter of this section, ‘A Life of Riley’, examines in a Valleys community the aftermath of the Second World War and the otherwise unlikely interpersonal connections it forged. The next chapter, ‘Sweets and Treats’, tells of a young boy’s window onto adult peccadillos. The structure of the first half of the novel continues in this way, offering vignettes of profound incidents in

individual lives, but never quite satisfactorily tying them together for the reader keen on narrative continuity.

'No Photographs of Crazy Horse' makes up the majority of the second half of the novel, further divided into sections and chapters. It is a dark thriller – more serious than Aberystwyth noir – motivated both by characters' personal, interconnected histories and how these are bound up with the historical narratives of industrial South Wales. It culminates in a consideration of the opportunities for both saints and sinners when discourses of economic and social regeneration dominate the political and funding landscape without measured consideration of what and whom regeneration is for.

Dream On is emphatically a Welsh piece, its politics and tone self-consciously located in remembered (and re-membered, when regeneration plays a part) valleys of passing decades.